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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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STREAMLINED HEATING IN ANCIENT ROME

Some of our more enterprising architects have begun to heat houses by warming floors and walls, thus producing a very uniform effect with a minimum of dirt and draught in the rooms. Two hot air flues from a similar system are on exhibition in the Royal Ontario Museum; they come from a Roman villa in Britain and date from the second century A.D. The principle was invented by a noted epicure, C. Sergius Orata, who lived about 100 B.C. In the system as employed by the Romans, the floor was supported on a forest of small pillars about two feet high. The hot air from the furnace circulated among the pillars and then rose through terracotta flues set in the thickness of the walls. The floor was extremely thick, consisting of as much as a foot of concrete resting on large tiles and surfaced with mosaic, so that it maintained a very even temperature. This system of heating was used chiefly for bath rooms both in private houses and public bathing establishments and was carried by the Romans to every part of their empire, from Syria to Britain.

STARS IN SUNLIGHT

Did you ever see stars in the daytime? Well I did. The other day I paid a visit to the mineral gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum. There, to my amazement, were several gems each showing a star on top. They were polished specimens of sapphire, ruby and rose quartz, but no star had been cut in the stones, nor was the light above them star-shaped. I was told that these specimens all contained minute inclusions which were arranged in such a way that when a point of light is held above them, these inclusions reflect the light back in lines which form a star.

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS, OLD AND NEW

The Chambered Nautilus, which builds one of the most beautiful of the modern molluscan shells, may have been immortalized by Oliver Wendell Holmes but the Royal Ontario Museum can demonstrate that it and hosts of related forms existed long before poets lived to sing their praises. In the collections side by side with specimens of these delicate pearly shells, fossilized remains of their ancestors may be seen in rock. Though these fossils now lack the exquisite colouring of the famed "ship of pearl," they nevertheless demonstrate that the mollusc inhabiting them had developed, millions and millions of years ago, the subtle process of building for itself a home of many chambers. In each chamber it lived during successive stages of its growth. Aside from the interest attached to the modern shell on account of its natural beauty, quantities of Nautilus shells are used in the finest cameo-cutting, and in the making of pearl ornaments. The ancient representatives of this animal group contribute to man's enjoyment also, though in a more practical way. Limestones formed by Nature through the ages from their abundant fossilized remains constitute the underlying rock of many of the present centres of civilization. Once again we see, therefore, that the primitive organisms of long-vanished seas contribute, in no small measure, to the foundations upon which our modern world is built.

MUSEUM BOARD ANNOUNCES PROMOTIONS

The Board of Trustees has appointed Dr. L. S. Russell to be the new Director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Palaeontology, and Dr. Madeleine A. Fritz to be Associate Director of the same museum.

Dr. Russell recently returned to the museum after service with the Canadian Army in Canada, England and the Continent, where he was in charge of mine detection service with the rank of major. Dr. Russell had seven years' service with the Geological Survey of Canada. A member of the museum staff since 1937 and an Assistant Professor of Palaeontology in the University of Toronto, Dr. Russell is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Miss Fritz, a graduate of McGill and Toronto Universities, has been in charge of the invertebrate collection of the Museum of Palaeontology since 1927. In addition to her museum work, Dr. Fritz is Associate Professor of Palaeontology in the University of Toronto. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, one of the three women so honoured.

MICE ARE VULNERABLE

Ordinarily, a mantle of snow conceals the meadow mice while they girdle young fruit trees, hedges and shrubbery. But the snow disappeared in December and early January of this winter, exposing the myriads of mice to the attacks of their enemies. Hawks and owls, fortunately for the farmer and gardener, were on hand in large numbers to feed on the vulnerable mice.

Nature, for the time being, has removed mice from the rationed list and has called in her old, dependable customers —the birds of prey, to share in the feast.

BROOKS MEMORIAL EXHIBIT

Paintings and book illustrations by th late Major Allan Brooks are on display, temporarily, at the Royal Ontario Museum. Major Brooks, who died recently in British Columbia, was the dean of North American bird artists. In his work he successfully combined keen observation with artistry. During the past quarter century Major Brooks has been commissioned to illustrate many of the major ornithological books. The Museum is fortunate in possessing more than 60 Brooks paintings of which many were donated by Wallace Havelock Robb of Abbey Dawn.

LOCAL MUSEUMS No. 6: CHILDREN'S SECTION

A museum has a special obligation to children—an important part of the public sometimes neglected in museum planning. It should serve as an adjunct to the school in the teaching of history and natural science; it should arouse the child's wonder concerning the world about him and provide the germ for life-long hobbies.

Children pay a sincere compliment to the work of the museum staff: they are excited by it. Juvenile needs require planning on the part of the curator. Labels and subject matter of exhibits should be simplified; cases should be low. It is well also to set aside a small representative collection of objects in a special room for the children's use.